

AETC News Clips



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11 Sep 01

BRAC vote could occur Wednesday

Panel weighs amendment

By SIG CHRISTENSON
EXPRESS-NEWS STAFF WRITER

The House could vote as early as Wednesday on a measure that seeks a fifth base-closure round in 2003 and take the unprecedented step of protecting some installations from shutdown.

The action, designed to gain leverage with backers of President Bush's base-closure proposal, was seen Monday by one top member of the House Armed Services Committee as a sudden, but certain, start of more installation angst in Texas.

"We had an inkling that this was going to happen," said Rep. Solomon Ortiz, D-Corpus Christi. "We didn't know it was going to be this quick."

The House would consider the base-closure measure as an amendment to the \$343.2 billion Defense Authorization Bill, which is likely to be voted on Wednesday. The amendment, sponsored by Rep. James V. Hansen, R-Utah, and Rep. Vic Snyder, D-Ark., would launch a new base-closure round in 2003.

It calls for exempting such obviously necessary installations as Fort Bragg, N.C., and Fort Hood in Killeen, from the purview of the closure commission.

As a hedge against political gamesmanship, the Joint Chiefs of Staff would be given quasi-veto power over the bases to be listed as safe from closure as

well as those to be shuttered. Congress also would select six of the base-closure commission's eight members, a significant departure from Bush's Efficient Facilities Initiative.

Bush would pick two members in the House plan, including the panel's chairman.

Under the Efficient Facilities Initiative, or EFI, Bush would consult with Congress but ultimately appoint all nine members of the closure commission.

At stake for Texas are 30 major active-duty and reserve installations, including San Antonio's Brooks AFB and Fort Sam Houston, which Rep. Ciro D. Rodriguez, D-San Antonio, has often characterized as vulnerable.

San Antonio's two other Air Force bases — Lackland and Randolph — appear, for now, safe from the threat of closure.

The military argues another closure round is needed because up to 25 percent of its remaining 398 major domestic bases are unnecessary. It has cut 97 bases in four closure rounds since 1988, including Kelly AFB and six other installations in Texas.

Kelly was the Air Force's oldest continuously operating base until it closed July 13 as ordered by a 1995 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission, known as BRAC.

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld told the Associated Press only days ago that another BRAC is needed to free up billions of dollars for modernization.

"I hope that the merits of the argument would stand up to any-

body's scrutiny, whether it's the House or Senate or any of the various oversight committees," said his spokesman, Rear Adm. Craig Quigley.

The fate of the amendment was in the hands of the House Rules Committee late Monday. The committee was considering whether to allow the amendment to be voted on by the full House later this week.

Even if the panel rejects the amendment, a congressional aide said it likely would be considered later this month by a House-Senate committee.

For that to happen, the Senate would have to approve a base-closure measure sought by Rumsfeld and key leaders, among them Sen. Carl Levin, D-Mich., chairman of the Armed Services Committee.

Hansen could not be reached for comment. But Snyder, the ranking Democrat on the House Armed Services subcommittee on personnel, said their measure was not a reaction to EFI, which many House members consider odious because of the power it would grant Rumsfeld in running the closure process.

Snyder, a BRAC supporter, said his amendment would give members a better shot at improving the closure process "if we have something in our House bill."

"I would think that if this amendment got included in a House bill, that would be a sign that the Congress is in agreement with Secretary Rumsfeld," he said, noting that a 17-8 Senate Armed Services Committee vote

last week in favor of a new BRAC round is a sign of a "different dynamic" in play.

Rodriguez, a member of the Armed Services Committee and a base-closure foe, said a BRAC is all but inevitable "if the Republican leadership wants it."

"I hope I'm wrong and I am going to be proven wrong, but I think there's going to be legislation to have another base closure (round)," Ortiz agreed.

"He's (Bush) going to have to come out and be a quite active proponent" to win a BRAC, said Rep. Charlie Gonzalez, D-San Antonio. "He won't be able to just sit back and let Secretary Rumsfeld do it."

While Army Secretary Thomas E. White and Air Force Secretary James Roche last week told the San Antonio Express-News they, too, expected to see another BRAC, former Army Secretary Louis Caldera said it was far more problematic — in part because many lawmakers have seen the suffering that closures bring to communities.

"Whenever you're proposing something like this you put your game face on, you make the best case for it, you speak optimistically," he said. "I made my phone calls to members of Congress, I made my visits, I brought it up in all my congressional outreach, so that's why I know what these guys think of this proposal."

"And you can go through all those proposals, but at the end of the day, I will tip my hat to them if they are able to get it passed."

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Rumsfeld prepares to battle bureaucracy

Streamlining of Pentagon proposed

By SUSANNE M. SCHAFER
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld declared a war Monday on bureaucracy in the Pentagon, saying he wants to combine some civilian and military staffs, cut duplicate positions in the military services and shift some jobs to the private sector.

In a Pentagon speech, Rumsfeld gave few specifics but said the changes are vital to saving every penny for modernizing the nation's military. The secretary argued that a bloated bureaucracy is nothing less than an adversary posing a serious security threat.

The Defense Department has 1.4 million active-duty men and women in uniform, an additional million in the National Guard and Reserves and about 659,000 civilian employees.

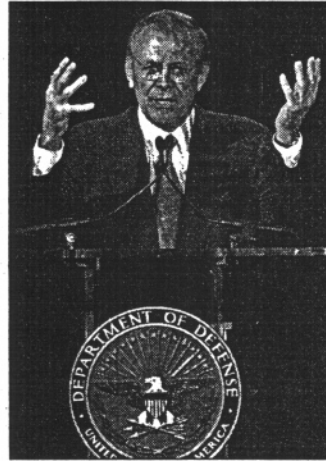
"Today we declare war on bureaucracy, not people, but processes," Rumsfeld said, arguing the campaign is aimed at shifting "Pentagon resources from the tail to the tooth."

Rumsfeld gave no specific numbers for his vision of consolidation and savings in the Pentagon's \$300 billion-plus budget.

The secretary pointed out that the Army, Navy and Air Force each have a general counsel's office, and that another exists to coordinate them all; that there are three separate commissary and exchanges systems for the services, and that in the Navy, "one out of every five officers is a physician."

Each service also has a separate public affairs office and liaison organization to deal with Congress, he added.

"I have a feeling we don't need as many as we have," he



KENNETH LAMBERT/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld says many of the armed forces' services overlap.

said.

He said it is silly for the Defense Department to have its own employees doing payroll paperwork and housecleaning services that could be better done by the private sector.

Rumsfeld argued that private industry could not conduct business the way the government does and survive.

The Pentagon must reform its financial information and computer information systems and close unneeded military bases, he said, in order to become more efficient.

"We must transform the way the department works," he said, adding he would require the Army, Navy and Air Force civilian service secretaries and other senior aides to conduct the cost-saving effort.

The defense secretary said Congress has mandated a 15 percent cut in the Pentagon's headquarters' staff by 2003 and that his moves are in part in response to that requirement.

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OUR TURN

Private investment good for Fort Sam

In an era of tight budgets for maintaining and rehabilitating military bases, a public-private partnership at Fort Sam Houston may pave the way for reviving bases.

Orion Partners Inc. and Roy F. Weston Inc. have signed a 50-year lease with Fort Sam Houston that will allow them to remodel the old Brooke Army Medical Center building and the Beach Pavilion Complex.

The structures are valuable San Antonio landmarks, but the Army doesn't have the funds to restore the Depression-era buildings.

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld recently said public-private lease agreements may be used in lieu of closing bases or parts of bases that the Pentagon can no longer afford to maintain.

Clearly, the success of this agreement will provide a major asset in the effort to protect Fort Sam Houston when military bases are closed in the future.

The innovative Partners in Preservation and Privatization offers hope for saving an important part of history and putting valuable real estate to good use.

Under the agreement, the private partners will provide the estimated \$50 million in needed rehabilitation work for the historic buildings. In

An innovative lease agreement can rehabilitate historic buildings at the San Antonio base.

return, they will have the right to lease the buildings to tenants.

A commitment for 60 percent occupancy is needed before remodeling will begin on each building.

Once they are updated, the facilities will offer major benefits.

Fort Sam Houston provides easy access to downtown and expressways, as well as free security. In addition, the historic and attractive setting is inviting to companies seeking a large, high-quality work environment.

In all, the companies will be able to lease 465,000 square feet of space at the historic base.

And in addition to preserving important buildings, the lease agreement will provide as much as \$250 million to the post through the life of the deal.

Following in the footsteps of the "city base" concept at Brooks AFB, the Fort Sam Houston agreement is on the cutting edge of preparing for a productive future at the nation's aging military bases.

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Altus AFB OK Newsclips

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Courts-martial to be held at AAFB

On Aug. 22, Amn. Joshua Clinton, 97th Supply Squadron, pleaded guilty at a general court-martial to using Ecstasy, methamphetamine, marijuana and the prescription drugs Lortab and Xanax. He also pleaded guilty to wrongfully distributing Xanax to his girlfriend.

Airman Clinton told the military judge, Lt.Col. Kurt Schuman, that he used the drugs on Altus AFB, as well as in the city of Altus and surrounding communities. He used the drugs on different occasions with both military and civilian members over the course of about a year.

After hearing all the facts of the case, the military judge sentenced Airman Clinton to a reduction to airman basic, confinement for 15 months and then to be discharged from the Air Force with a bad conduct discharge.

A bad conduct discharge is a punitive discharge that puts limits on future employment opportunities and will deny the accused other advantages which are enjoyed by airmen who have served honorably. "Basically, a bad conduct discharge deprives the accused of substantially all benefits administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Air Force," said the prosecu-

tor, Capt. Maurleen Zuni-ga.

In the second court, A1C Hubert Henderson, 97th Security Forces Squadron, pleaded guilty at a summary court-martial to charges of breaking into a dorm room and wrongfully appropriating a stereo, television and a bank card that he later used to obtain cash advances. The summary court officer, Lt.Col. Jeff Lewis sentenced Airman Henderson to confinement for 30 days and a reduction to airman basic.

According to the prosecutor, Capt. Tom Buccell, "Wrongful appropriation is a lesser offense than larceny because there is no intent to permanently deprive the rightful owner of the property. But in any instance, it is a crime to break into a dorm room and take property without the owner's permission. Residents have the right to expect that their possessions are safe when locked in their dorm room."

Capt. Michelle Telford, the deputy staff judge advocate and acting chief of military justice, noted that

these two cases illustrate how commanders, in consultation with the legal office, have a variety of tools to enforce discipline and to protect the military mission.

Captain Telford also said that courts-martial are open to the public and that there are courts scheduled Sept. 13 and 25 and Oct 3.

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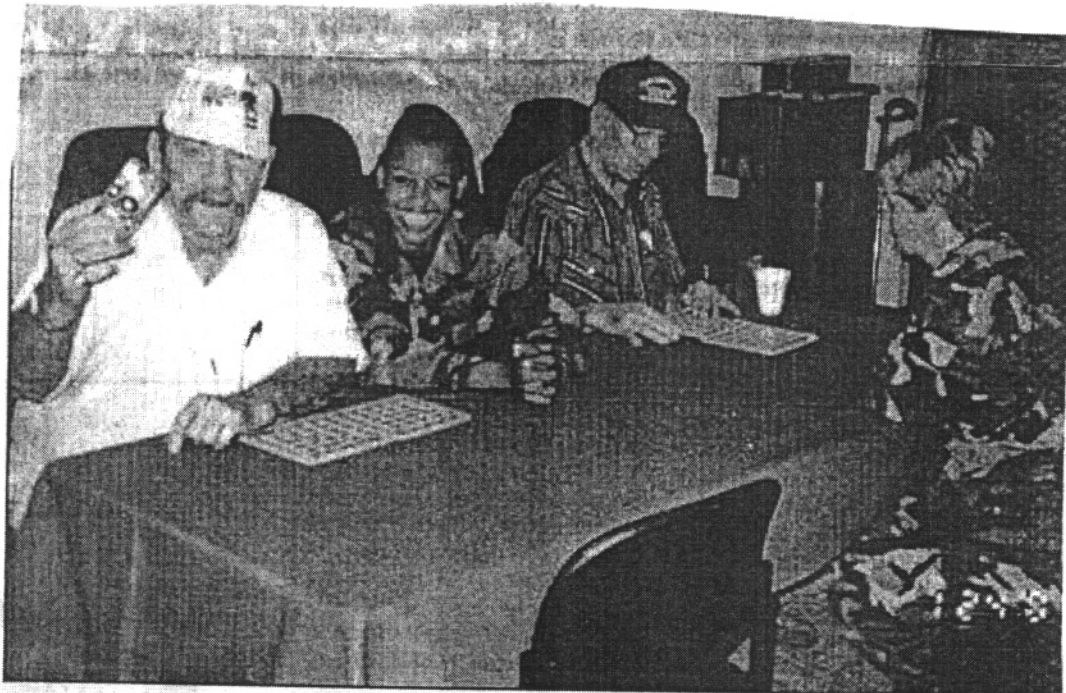
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courtesy photo

Veterans enjoy Bingo at Clinton center

Veterans of Foreign Wars, Post 4876, sponsored bingo games at the Clinton Veteran Center recently for veterans housed in that facility. Every other month Post 4876 hosts the bingo games, where the residents at the center play for quarters with a prize of \$10 for a cover-all. The Post always ensures the residents have refreshments for the event, as well as supplying the prize money for the games. Two of the residents are shown playing bingo, helped by two military members from the Altus AFB.

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Altus Air Force Association Chapter selected Best in State

Altus Chapter 342 of the Air Force Association has been selected as the best chapter in the state according to chapter president Mike Bradley. The annual award is sponsored by the National Bank of Commerce, and the winning chapter was announced by TEXOMA regional president Dan Heth at the Oklahoma State AFA convention recently held in Enid, Okla.

"I am extremely happy that Altus took the chapter of the year award. All of our chapter officers and members of our executive board of directors worked extremely hard this year as they have always done. But to be recognized with the first chapter of the year award certainly proves that Altus has an outstanding chapter," said Bradley.

"This is the first year that we have had a chapter of the year award and the competition between the four chapters in Oklahoma was extremely keen," said state president Don Johnson. The award was sponsored by NBC, which has banks in all of our chapter locations, Altus, Enid, Oklahoma City and Tulsa. We certainly appreciate Ken Ferguson, CEO of NBC, for his support and

for the \$300.00 first prize money. The award will be displayed in the bank where the winning chapter is located."

During the convention business meeting new state officers were elected for 2001-2002. Johnson was reelected as state president, George Pankonin, Enid, executive vice-president, Sandy Nichols, Altus, treasurer, and Tom Clark, Tulsa, secretary.

Tom McKee, national chairman of the board for AFA, was the keynote speaker. He also took the opportunity to announce that two Altus members were selected for national awards.

Bob Ottman was an exceptional service award winner and Johnson earned a national medal of merit.

Several Oklahoma AFA awards were announced at the state convention included the Oklahoma Medal of Merit to Bradley and Terry Mosley. Exceptional Service awards went to Richard Baldwin, Hugh Gordon, Eva Leta Lucas, and Sandy Nichols. Nichols was also named as the state's AFA person of the year.

In other state AFA awards, Ken Ferguson was honored as the Oklahoma Community Partner of the Year and Altus teacher Tom Hanes was selected as the teacher of the year. Hanes was also recognized by the national Air Force Aerospace Education Foundation and was presented a cash award and a jacket.

In the military awards category, Altus Air Force Base had two winners. The 97th Supply Squadron was selected as the state military unit of the year. The award was accepted by Lt. Col. (select) Matt McGovern, squadron commander.

SSgt. Aaron Diaz, 97th Operations Support Squadron, a Senior Airman at the time of his nomination, was selected as the Airman of the Year.

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Courtesy Photo

Altus chapter president Mike Bradley, second from right, receives the Oklahoma Chapter of the Year award from Ken Fergeson. Fergeson is the CEO of the National Bank of Commerce, sponsor of the annual award. At left is Tom McKee, national AFA board chairman, and on the right is Oklahoma state president Don Johnson.

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-- Don Johnson

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Civilian pacts help military reduce costs

Lynda Stringer
and Trish Choate
Times Record News

The line dividing military and civilian health care has blurred nationwide in a trend United Regional Health Care System and Sheppard Air Force Base recently joined.

Medical organizations have forged more than 600 agreements to share facilities, personnel and expertise in and out of uniform, officials said. The trend gathered force in the mid-to-late '90s and is growing in the new millennium.

Wichita Falls added steam to it last month when United Regional gave credentials to Sheppard obstetrician-gynecologists and pediatricians. Now base babies make their debut into the world at United Regional. To cover the arrangement, the hospital system extended its contract with TRICARE, a military health care system.

Many salute the agreements.

"It makes no sense to spend more tax dol-

lars," said Brett Willey, director of physician services at Jackson County Memorial Hospital in Altus, Okla., which shares resources with Altus Air Force Base. "We're serving them, and they're serving us."

And the partnerships can channel more care to veterans.

"I think it can certainly help, particularly with certain specialties, areas where they may not have a high demand for certain kinds of care," said Rep. Mac Thornberry, R-Clarendon, Texas, a member of the House Armed Services and Budget Committee. "If they can make use of

civilian facilities and make that care available, it's that much better."

The agreements help patients and hospitals in an age of rising costs, officials said. The military and the civilian sector struggle to make health care ends meet.

Indeed, the military health care system is "fundamentally broken" and has serious problems that cannot easily be fixed, testified surgeons general of the Navy, Army and Air Force and the acting assistant secretary for health affairs on July 18 before the House Armed Services Committee.

The system has a backlog of maintenance and repair projects brought on by years of tight funding, said Joe Salko, a Department of Defense official responsible for resource-management issues in TRICARE.

But the surgeons general and acting secretary agree that for the first time in recent years, a new budget realistically estimates military health care costs, Salko said. The president's 2002 budget will not resolve the entire backlog of projects.

Arrangements between the military and civilians run the gamut from limited partnerships to extensive resource sharing.

Funding cutbacks prompted the agreement between Jackson County Memorial Hospital and Altus Air Force Base, said Col. Charles Coffa, commander of the Altus military hospital.

The Air Force downsized the base hospital drastically. Base obstetricians, pediatricians, family-practice physicians and internal-medicine doctors treat military patients at Jackson County Memorial. Military patients

receive emergency care at the civilian hospital.

Both Altus hospitals benefit equally, Willey said. Military doctors, for instance,

help civilian physicians deal with emergencies.

Civilian and military funds built a new hospital in Alamogordo, N.M., near El Paso, Texas, said Lillie Lewis, marketing director of Gerald Champion Memorial Hospital. A partnership sprang up during Desert Storm when the civilian hospital began delivering babies for Holloman Air Force Base in New Mexico.

The area needed a new inpatient facility, so officials gained approval from Congress to throw \$7 million of defense funds into a communal \$36 million pot, Lewis said. The new hospital opened in December 1999. And 13 of the 60 doctors practicing there are military.

San Antonio is home to a joint residency program, supported by the University of Texas Health Science Center, Wilford Hall Medical Center on Lackland Air Force Base and Brooke Army Medical Center, said Dewey Mitchell, chief of public affairs for Wilford Hall.

It includes 40 residency programs, Mitchell said. The San Antonio civilian and military communities benefit from cost-savings, greater efficiency and the varied

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learning environment for residents who rotate among hospitals. In addition, all three hospitals participate in the state's trauma network. Patients — civilian or military — go to the nearest facility.

But some fear the arrangements might go too far to suit them. Veterans who use Sheppard Hospital are concerned its emergency room might be downgraded to an acute-care facility.

The hospital commander said officials have made no decisions about Sheppard's ER. Sheppard officials don't make those kinds of decisions, said Col. Theresa Casey, 82nd Medical Group commander. They require congressional advisement and approval from the Secretary of the Air Force.

Sheppard representatives are always evaluating services to offer the highest-quality care, Casey said. But that doesn't mean a change will happen.

Kevin Gross, United Regional chief executive officer, said base officials have not approached him about extending the agreement.

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Sheppard commissary holding its own

Lynda Stringer

Times Record News

It's a long-standing military family tradition: load up the kids for your monthly trip to the commissary.

But why take the extra time to drive on base to shop when you have plenty to choose from right around the corner? Sheppard Air Force Base commissary director Mike Cox said the answer is simple.

"Since we don't operate with a profit motive, we have the best prices in town," Cox said.

But competition with civilian grocery stores is still

tough. With many customers living off base, it's an increasingly harder sell.

At the Sheppard store, one of almost 300 at military installations worldwide operated by the Defense Commissary Agency, sales are down 8% over this time last year, Cox said.

"But, we are certainly seeing a change to that; we've started picking up over the last 11 months" Cox said.

The Sheppard commissary is being creative to get people to take advantage of the commissary savings.

"It's not so much about competition with the folks

downtown as it is about educating people about the benefit," Cox said.

The commissary is there, he said, as a military benefit for active duty, retirees, National Guard and Reserve personnel and their families. Products are sold to customers at wholesale cost plus a 5 percent surcharge. "There is no markup," Cox said.

The retirees make up about 40 percent of their customers.

Younger military families, Cox said, shop regularly once they realize how much they can save. According to the latest market basket survey, service members save 29.2 per-

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Sheppard AFB, Wichita Falls, Texas
Times Record News, 10 Sep 2001, Page 2B
Email: www.trnonline.com



Stadium in honor of veterans

Col. Randy Floyd, commander of the 782 Training Wing at Sheppard Air Force Base, addresses the crowd Friday evening at the dedication ceremony of City View High School's new football field, Veterans Field. The school began playing varsity-level football last year, and the Mustangs played all their games on the road. The field's name is meant to honor all veterans, particularly those from City View who served their country.

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Sheppard AFB, Wichita Falls, Texas
Times Record News, 8 Sep 2001, Page 4A
Email: www.tnonline.com

cent on their overall grocery basket compared to civilian grocery stores and super centers, Cox said. The yearly savings is estimated at \$2,300 a year for a family of four.

Cox specifically targets the single airmen on base who don't have the facilities to cook a big meal. "It's a challenge to reach the student population because they have a limited area they are living in, so we try to give them a touch of home," Cox said.

Home meal replacements — home-cooked meals ready to heat and eat — are a growing trend with the students.

They've also had special

gimmicks like moonlight madness sales with popular music playing on the intercom to entice younger military shoppers. The Cowboys mascot, Rowdy, even made a recent appearance. The store also hosts customer focus groups to find out what shoppers want and how the store can improve to meet their needs.

The biggest draw, Cox said, is a case lot sale. The case lot sales — where hundreds of items are sold at even bigger discounts — compete with warehouse stores like Sam's.

This past weekend 264 of the DeCA commissaries,

including Sheppard, participated in what was billed as the World's Biggest Case Lot Sale, with more than one million cases of items ordered worldwide. Case lot sales increase the savings for military customers to 50 percent, according to a DeCA release.

Cox said despite the ample supply of civilian choices the military commissary is holding on to its share of the market and isn't planning to go anywhere.

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